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Introduction

H. M. PATEL

The essays in this volume, most of which were presented to Shri A. D. Gorwala in December 1975, when he reached the age of 75, have been contributed by his friends and admirers. The decision to publish a volume of this nature was decided upon barely a year ago. That I have been able to obtain so many contributions is indicative of the great regard and affection in which Shri Gorwala is held. Every one who was invited to write and who was physically in a position to do so, readily agreed to write a piece. Each one was left to decide for himself the topic of his contribution. Understandably, therefore, the essays deal with a variety of subjects, but even so they do give some indication of the large area of public affairs on which Gorwala has offered comments, whether under the pseudonyms of Vivek and Vidura, or under his own name until 1960, and later in his little weekly entitled *Opinion*, now in its sixteenth year. Even though the contributions have been sent in out of their affection and regard for Shri Gorwala, I cannot help expressing my heartfelt gratitude to the contributors for responding so readily and so generously.

It would be of interest to the general reader to set out here a brief account of Shri Gorwala's remarkable career of silent and unassuming service over the years, both after he joined the Indian Civil Service, and after his retirement from service. In a recent issue of *Opinion*, Shri Gorwala has recorded a brief biographical note in very characteristic terms :

For over fifty years have I been a servant of the people of India; for the first twenty-three as an official, and thereafter upto the present time as an ordinary citizen. As an official, my twenty-three years took me through various roles, Assistant Collector and Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Acting Collector and

District Magistrate, Manager, Encumbered Estates and Court of Wards, Assistant Revenue Officer of the Sukkur Barrage, Revenue Officer of the Barrage*, Deputy Secretary to the Government of India, Finance Secretary to the Government of Bombay, Supply Commissioner and ex-officio Finance Secretary to the Government of Bombay, Vice-Chairman of the First Foodgrains Policy Committee, Member of the Indian Delegation to Britain and the US to secure additional food imports during the war-scarcity years, Member of the Indian Delegation to the conference for the formation of FAO, and President of the Commodities Prices Board. As a non-official, my activities have been mainly two, the making of reports to Government on such subjects as Administration, the management of State Enterprises, Export Promotion, Rural Credit, Stock Exchange reform; and the offering of comment on public affairs under the pseudonyms of Vivek, Vidura and under my own name in several daily newspapers, and—when none of them would publish my articles any longer—from 1960 in the little weekly I started, *Opinion*, now in its sixteenth year, which you, good readers, know well.

This is an admirable summary account of Shri Gorwala's wide and varied experience, of the responsible positions held by him, and of his contribution after retirement through reports submitted to Government on complex problems, as also through public-spirited frank and forthright comment. But what the brief statement does not indicate is that in each of the positions held by Gorwala, he discharged his duties with exceptional brilliance and thoroughness, and indeed, in some of them, he was responsible for valuable innovative reforms, and for achievements of a unique nature. He it was who as Supply Commissioner showed conclusively that monopoly foodgrains procurement was a practical proposition without acting as a disincentive to production and that rationing of the most elaborate kind can also be managed efficiently in a city of the size of Bombay. Likewise, reports submitted by him after retirement as a citizen in the fifties are recognized here and abroad even today as authoritative and as essential works of reference for students of the subject. Nor does the bald statement give any idea of the high standards he always himself maintained as a civil servant, and insisted that they be maintained in the organization under his care or, later, of the high sense of civic duties

* All in Sind.

and responsibilities he displayed as an ordinary citizen, and propagated through every means available to him.

Illustrative of his moral courage when issues of vital public interest were involved—and economic decisions and policies often raise such issues—is his letter of resignation as President of the Commodities Prices Board, and from the Indian Civil Service, addressed to the Finance Minister in September, 1947.

> Before I accepted the presidentship of this Board [The Commodities Prices Board which was established early in 1947], I was told that the Cabinet regarded a healthy price structure as a matter of critical importance. Now, at the end of seven months working, I am constrained to express the view that despite the best endeavours of the Board, in the matter of prices Government has pursued neither an appropriate nor a consistent policy. In fact, it would not be wrong to infer from Government's decisions that it neither has a policy, nor desires to have one. On vital matters, the Board's considered advice has been rejected. In spite of repeated requests, Government has not seen fit to publish for general information any of the Board's reports, except the first one on Rabi grains. The Board's comprehensive report on policy has not yet even been considered by Cabinet. . . . In the circumstances, no purpose is likely to be served by my continuing in office, and I hereby tender, with effect from October 4th, my resignation of the post of President, Commodities Prices Board.
>
> It is with a heavy heart that I take this step. The present is a most critical stage in the economic history of this country. The forces of inflation have gathered such strength that only the most determined and resolute action is likely to hold them. The cost of living, the main and central element in the economic structure, mounts higher and higher. Life becomes more and more difficult and insupportable, except for the really well-to-do.* . . .
>
> In conclusion, Mr Finance Minister, I wish the Government of which you are a member, the best of luck. Simultaneously with this letter to you, I am asking the Home Ministry to permit me to take the leave due to me, preparatory to retirement. In this country to a much greater extent perhaps than in most

* His warning was not heeded and the result is eloquently reflected in the observations of the Export Promotion Committee appointed by the Government of India in 1949 : 'Indian prices are nearly four times what they were on the outbreak of the war. During the war, prices rose by about 150 per cent and, since then, they have risen by another 140 per cent, the rate of increase being highest in the last two years.'

other countries, on the actions of Government depends the welfare of the people, and my prayer to Providence is that in spite of the many errors that Government commits, it may be enabled to avoid disaster to the country.

This letter would be remarkable at any time, and in any democratic country, but was particulary remarkable in that it was written very soon after Independence, and was addressed to a national Government composed of men who for the most part had hardly any experience of administration. It does credit to the writer as to the addressee. The former felt so keenly about the particular policy issues and their likely future implications that he thought it necessary to submit his resignation from service. The recipient, the Home Minister in particular*, not only did not hold his manner of resigning against him, but readily invited Gorwala to work on an important committee within weeks of his resignation!

This incident highlights the qualities that one who is a Zarthosti is called upon to develop as an article of faith and duty. Zoroastrianism is a dualistic religion, teaching that there are forces of Evil as well as of Good. Gorwala has himself described what in his view is a Zarthosti's duty. It is to strive against the Evil.

He may succeed or he may not. If the latter, he must try again and again, remembering that the first of our prayers says, 'That is the highest virtue which is virtue for the sake of virtue alone'. To be disheartened, to give up, to abandon fight for the good, we consider a sin, something to repent of and not to repeat. . . . Truth-telling, forswearing the lie, is to us an essential element in the fight for Good and against Evil. From which it follows that a Zarthosti's word is sacred, not to be broken, however difficult the new circumstances. What we promise we do. A Zarthosti cannot have recourse to duplicity, double-dealing. cheating, fraud of any nature, deceit. He must be honest, straightforward, frank, prepared to speak out and act against wrong-doing, whoever the doer. Justice and courage we count among the first weapons in the fight against evil.

In this context one of the contributors to this volume has asked me to 'echo the following sentiments' in my Introduction:

* At the time Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

He is one of the priceless jewels of modern India—a true Zarathrustian, pure in thoughts, words and deeds; a noble Indian, himself treasuring and enshrining in his own personality, the immortal values of life taught by India's unbroken chain of sages and seers; a great liberal who may sometimes be intemperate in words but who never ceases to be a true democrat. He has paid heavily for the courage of his convictions, but would any democratic society survive without men of such convictions? What more shall we say of this truly great man?

It is interesting to see how, in all Gorwala's writings, there runs one common concept of the conflict between good and evil, what is morally correct and what is morally not correct. To give only one example, we may quote from what he said in a report which he submitted to the Mysore Government:

It is not the sentiments of men which make history, but their actions. So too, Government is made good or bad not by words, but by the deeds—or misdeeds—of those in power.

How can the taking of right action be ensured? According to the Hindu tradition, by ensuring the personal integrity of the ruler and the moral sense of the citizenry. The result of the interaction of these upon one another is bound to lead to good Government. . . .

No amount of progress in technique or machinery can be of much benefit if the moral standard of those in charge of Government is deplorable, or the people as a whole are dishonest and self-seeking. In either case satisfactory results cannot follow. . . .

The ideal, of course, is not always easy to achieve, but approximation to it can and must be attempted. If not, worthwhile results cannot follow, no matter how numerous and well thought-out any suggestions about personnel, organization, structure, or methods.

I would like to acknowledge here my deep gratitude to a number of persons for the generous help that has made it possible for the volume to be completed within so short a time. I cannot name them all, but must express special thanks to Shri P. G. Joshi who collected the essays, Shri R. E. Hawkins who edited them, and Shri V. P. Bhagwat of the Mouj Printing Bureau who overcame all difficulties and completed the work in time for a birthday presentation.